DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 176 046 CE 021 845

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TITLE Statement by Robert J. Kingston, President of the College Board, before the Subcommittee on Postsecondary Education of the Committee on Education and Labor, June 21, 1979.
INSTITUTION College Entrance Examination Board, New York, N.Y.
PUB DATE 21 Jun 79
NOTE 20p.; Not available in paper due to thin type

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Access to Education; *Adult Education; *Continuous Learning; *Disadvantaged Groups; *Educational Needs; *Federal Aid; Federal Government; *Government Role; Postsecondary Education; Resource Allocations; State Aid
IDENTIFIERS Higher Education Act Title I

ABSTRACT

The federal government should exercise leadership in helping concentrate national resources on programs that would make lifelong learning opportunities more widely available to all segments of the population. There is a need to concentrate thought and funding upon (1) the development of services through which adults can assess their genuine educational needs; (2) the development of programs designed to meet those needs specifically; and (3) the coordination of the various resources that can make all such programs truly accessible. One principal objective of the federal role in lifelong learning should be the promotion of access to education by disadvantaged adults. We should be looking for innovative instruments to assess the educational needs of disadvantaged adults, viable counseling mechanisms, and exemplary programs to set the style for lifelong learning among these. Another objective of federal policy in lifelong learning should be to recognize and encourage the active participation and investment of other sectors, particularly the states and private employers. Institutional resources and programs of lifelong learning should be analyzed and coordinated so that new networks and new economies may be effected as new clienteles are afforded access to the learning society. (JH)

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ED176046

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President of the College Board

before the

Subcommittee on Postsecondary Education

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Statement of Robert J. Kingston

President of the College Board

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I am Robert Kingston, President of the College Board. I am pleased to be here today to contribute some thoughts on the federal role in lifelong learning and adult continuing education, as this subcommittee continues its deliberations on Title I of the Higher Education Act.

The College Board, as you doubtless know, is a nonprofit membership association, established in 1900, and comprising today more than 2,500 members--colleges and universities, secondary schools and school systems, and educational associations from throughout the United States. Traditionally and consistently the business of the Board has been to help improve access to education and to aid people in making educational transitions of various kinds. Best known still for programs of testing and financial aid that are designed to help students move from high school towards the nation's colleges and universities, the Board is in fact in the service of anyone who faces the problems of moving from that kind of education which society requires of all of us--in our high schools--to the various kinds of education and training that we may individually seek to advance our careers or achieve practical knowledge and personal satisfaction thereafter. The Board has provided a forum for the identification and consideration of differing views by educational institutions, and it seeks to promote their resolution in the light of national priorities.

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It's the kind of organization that has helped and will continue to help people make choices, set standards, define goals, and measure achievement. And it's the kind of organization that advises postsecondary institutions and other organizations concerned with education on meeting the learning needs of a vast number of students.

For the past twenty-five years, particularly, the College Board has been a principal voice in advocacy of the goal of equal opportunity for postsecondary education in this country. But it is our extensive experience in facilitating access and transition for adults that forms the foundation of my remarks today.

In the mid-1960's, we developed the College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) which continues to provide a method for adults to demonstrate what they have learned, regardless of how. In the early 1970's, the Commission on Non-Traditional Study and the project on the role of the public libraries in adult independent learning deepened our commitment to the needs of adult learners. Now, in the last two years, and with substantial support from the Exxon Education Foundation, the Board has taken the initiative through its Future Directions for a Learning Society (FDLS) program in developing services to strengthen the relationship between adult learners and institutions of learning. The FDLS project is engaged in an active search for strategies, services, and policies to gauge the needs of adult learners; to solve the problems institutions face in meeting these needs; and to increase public, professional, and political understanding of the field of adult learning. It has become a rallying point for all of us interested in research about, programs of, and policies for lifelong learning. My remarks are founded in the experience of that

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project, and I want to talk now of some of the things we have learned, and some we still don't know.

We know, for example, how rapidly the practice of adult learning is expanding; and we know pretty clearly who is pursuing it. But we don't know exactly why; and that limits to some extent our present ability to chart the course or create the architecture of the "learning society."

Growth of lifelong learning

A learning society is one of the oldest ideas among educators. Creating it in America today is one of the newest. We in the United States are moving away from the "linear" life plan in which education is for the young, work for the middle-aged, and enforced leisure for the elderly; we are moving toward a blending life plan in which education, work, and leisure are intermingled throughout life. Already lifelong learning has undergone dramatic growth in this decade. While this subcommittee hardly needs to be reminded of the extent of this growth, I must briefly sketch its parameters as they relate to postsecondary education institutions.

-- National surveys estimate that between 17 million and 32 million adults are currently participating in classes, workshops, job training, discussion groups, or some other form of organized instruction.

-- Adult participation in formal education is increasing more than twice as fast as the adult population itself.

-- Adult and continuing education activities were offered in 2,225 colleges and universities during 1975-76, up 102 percent from 1967-68.

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-- Registrations in adult and continuing education offered by colleges and universities in 1975-76 totaled 8.8 million, up 57 percent from 1967-68.
-- In 1977, 36 percent of all college students were 25 years of age or older; five years earlier, only 28 percent were.
-- Students 25 to 34 years of age accounted for half of the increase in junior college enrollment and a third of the increase in college and university enrollment between 1970 and 1977.

All of this will still convey only a sense of the demand for learning opportunities by the American public. The College Board has discovered 40 million Americans who express a need for instruction and support services related to career transition; and George Gallup found that 60 million persons wish to take one or more adult learning courses right now.

Participants in lifelong learning

Increasingly, as educational opportunities abound, we are becoming a learning society, but we don't yet have all the paths of access charted. Participation in education by adults spans a wide range of backgrounds, previous educational experiences, and incomes, but it tends to be greatest among one broad group: today's adult learners are disproportionately young, white, educated, and earning salaries above the national median family income.

-- 16 percent of those between 17 and 34 years of age take advantage of adult educational opportunities (excluding those enrolled full-time in high school or postsecondary institutions), whereas

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only 4 percent of those over the age of 54 participate.

-- 12.1 percent of white adults participate in adult education, whereas only 6.9 percent of blacks participate (non-black minorities show a 13.4 percent participation rate).

-- 28.3 percent of those with four years of college or more participate, while 11.9 percent of those with only four years of high school do (and only 3.3 percent of those with less than high school diplomas).

-- 17.7 percent of those with annual family incomes of $25,000 or more participate while only 9.8 percent of those whose income is between $5,000 and $10,000 and only 5 percent of those with incomes below $5,000 participate (1976 data).

Reasons for adult participation in education

Now while we do know that adult learning is increasingly commonplace, and while we do know something of the kinds of participants, we don't yet have any theory which might explain why adults learn, when they learn, and what they learn.

No doubt the reasons for adult involvement in education are many and varied. But a recent nationwide random sample survey of 1,500 households--one of the projects conducted by the Board's Future Directions for a Learning Society Project--has discredited the commonly held idea that adults enroll in education merely out of habit, or for recreational purposes.

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Of those respondents who reported participation in some form of organized learning in the previous twelve months, 83 percent attributed it to some specific cause--not just habit or idle curiosity. Of these, 56 percent cited a specific job or career related factor as the reason for their return to education: to obtain a job or enter a career field; to keep or improve performance in a current job, or avoid obsolescence in a career; or to advance in a job or career.

Statistics only tell part of the story; the words of those we surveyed convey an important message as well. One of those whom we surveyed was in a position familiar to many recent college graduates:

> I graduated with a degree in teaching, decided against teaching and got a job in business. When I was going through four years of college, learning how to teach students American history, I missed a lot of math courses and other subjects I now use daily on the job. I'm taking a U.S. Department of Commerce course in advanced export administration--I'm in the export business--to improve my skills so I can do much better in my job.

Another adult with whom we spoke cited a request by his employer as the reason for further education:

> I'm an electrician and I took a course in electrical estimating put on by the Electrical Contractors Association. My boss asked me to take the course because he has plans to bring me into the office and make me an estimator. Since I took the course, my boss has had me spend some time in the office doing the beginning phases of electrical estimating.

After changes in the occupational area, family life was the next largest "trigger," accounting for 34 percent of adults returning to education for a specific reason: death of a spouse or child; divorce or separation; sending the last child off to school; trying to keep pace with inflation.

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One of those we surveyed was widowed early in life:

> I was widowed at 25. I began taking lots of courses at that point for several reasons. One was that I needed something to do, now that my husband was gone. Another was that there were a lot of things I didn't know how to do and needed to learn. Another was that I wanted to learn so that I would be associated with people.

Another adult sought further education in order to keep the household budget in line:

> When my husband retired on a fixed income we found it very hard to manage the household budget, what with inflation and prices going up steadily. We had no way to get more money so we had to learn to trim expenses. That is why I'm taking this course in budgeting and managing household income.

Responses like these have led some of my colleagues to develop the hypothesis that participation in adult learning is "triggered"--usually by an event in the individual life, an event relating to career, or by family problems and opportunities, or by citizenship, or by specific religious or aesthetic experiences. Frankly, I am a little skeptical about this myself: we Americans are a moralistic lot, and we tend always to look for socially acceptable justifications, or at least for clear rationalizations, of most of our actions post facto. At any rate, that study will be published a little later on in the year, under the title Americans in Transition: Life Events as Triggers to Adult Learning, so you may judge for yourself. But meanwhile the information does not help to explain the preponderance of young, educated, relatively affluent white adults in the active learning society.

That leaves us, I'm afraid, with only one other speculation--which may not be immediately helpful to our present endeavor. I fear, Mr. Chairman, that although people may pursue lifelong learning for reason

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rather than habit, nonetheless reluctance to learn, or the pattern of failure may indeed be addictive. Those who have education and success, continue to want them; and those who do well are particularly eager to maintain the practice. Conversely, those who have been kept out, or who did not perform well, are reluctant to continue. I shall return to this thought in a moment, after we consider the federal role in the provision of lifelong learning opportunities.

Dimensions of the current federal role

The federal role in the adult, lifelong learning arena is long-standing, with roots going back to the Agricultural Extension Act. The federal government was responsible for the introduction of the largest and most successful program of access for adult learners in American higher education under the World War II GI Bill. Today, the federal role in lifelong learning is extensive, encompassing 270 programs in 29 cabinet level departments and agencies.

But the federal government is not alone in its support of lifelong learning. In 1975, companies with 500 or more employees were estimated to have spent $2 billion directly on the education and training of their employees. States and localities--both as public agencies and as employers--also support lifelong education. Community colleges, as local and state supported institutions, are one of the principal providers of education to adults; liberal arts colleges are increasingly adapting their offerings and schedules to serve adults; and continuing education is ever provided through the traditional but often imaginative "extension" services of major universities.

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Given the growth in participation of adults, the proliferation of programs by educational institutions and employers, and the significant though diffuse federal investment to date, we must ask seriously if there is need for further federal attention. Lifelong learning will continue to grow regardless of what the federal government does or doesn't do. Individuals undergoing change, particularly those faced by new demands in the workplace, will continue to find ways to further their education; and employers can be expected to increase their support both as direct providers of education and as sources of funding for employee education by external entities.

Congress did, of course, signal its interest and support for the general concept of lifelong learning in 1976, by enactment of the Lifelong Learning Act, Title I-B of the Higher Education Act; and it cited the trends in our society which call for effective use of lifelong learning resources. Mr. Chairman, you and other members of this subcommittee have indicated your own firm support for the needs of adult learners. So I'm going to say that it now seems to me possible still more sharply to focus a concept that apparently has no bounds.

Three approaches, it seems to me, <u>might</u> be argued for the federal government:

First, it <u>is</u> possible to make a case for a larger federal role on the principle that furthering the education of adults--beyond the informal learning which we all experience daily--yields important benefits for society as well as individuals, of both a tangible and intangible quality.

Ever since Jefferson we've accepted that our kind of democracy does demand thought and knowledge of its citizens; and we can easily argue

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that the practice of education, throughout the citizenry, is characteristic of a healthy civilization. Under this argument we could ask that Congress seek the design of a new "nation of learners." Yet I suspect that none of us in this room would find it appropriate today for the federal government to provide blanket support to the nationwide development of lifelong educational opportunities--in a society which on the whole does a fairly good job of educating itself!

Alternatively, the focusing of federal interest and public money upon certain kinds of education or training--upon certain subjects, let us say, in which expertise will contribute markedly to the commonweal--this is a practice more easy to support. And indeed it is the historical approach of this nation. Federal programs, scattered throughout the government, have in fact been created when at one time or another the Congress has recognized particular needs and particular ways of answering them. I would not suggest that this pattern discontinue, for I know from my own experience in the federal government that it works very well and provides significantly for the educational needs of a broad range of adult citizens. Yet that hardly is the business of this subcommittee today, nor a reason for amending Higher Education Legislation.

But finally--and this I think is a far more compelling demand upon the attention of this committee--the federal government may concern itself with the provision of opportunities and the use of resources; with serving where its helping or refurbishing hand can restore a balance or secure equality, or fashion an access. Historically this has been the role of the federal government in higher education: to ensure that all of our citizens share equally in the opportunities that the nation affords,

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that opportunities are fashioned to meet needs nationwide. So should it be with respect to lifelong learning. The Congress may exercise thus its leadership by securing for all the potential benefits of the learning society.

Disadvantaged learners

By this third approach, a case can be made that the federal government should look to the needs of adults who have earlier missed the full benefits of education; and that the federal government in doing so should help to match the resources that we have against the needs which we may identify.

If we ask what the federal government can do for those adults who have been previously denied the benefits of higher education and who are not now participating in education, the answer reminds us of one we have heard before, when policy makers addressed the needs of disadvantaged youth. Those least likely to be participating in some form of organized adult education are less than well educated, poor and black, and probably living in the center city or on the farm. The less prior education, the less likely is someone to participate in adult education. The lower the family income, the less likely is one to participate in education as an adult. Older adults (those 55 and over) and those who reside either in the central city or on the farm are less likely to participate. And between 1969 and 1975, the participation of black adults in education increased 5 percent or 0.8 percent per year, while their numbers in the population increased 18 percent; yet at the same time, participation of white adults in education increased 32 percent, although their numbers

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in the population increased only 11.3 percent.

The situation is getting worse, not better. Between 1969 and 1975, the participation of college-educated adults in continuing education increased nearly twice as fast as high school graduates, with white participation increasing eight times as fast as that for blacks. Only growth in the participation of women--more than double that of men--provided a bright spot, although most of this improvement was through white women, holding college degrees, and with family incomes of $25,000 or more.

Matching resources to needs

It seems, then, reasonable to make a principal objective of the federal role in lifelong learning the promotion of access to education by disadvantaged adults--those who because of incomes, physical difficulty, minority status, have not had the opportunities for education that nowadays we try to guarantee to all of our citizens; or who, because of such deficiencies in their earlier education, or because of their age, do not presently have ready access to available programs.

Yet I cannot simply present this opportunity, attractive as it may be, without a word of cautionary emphasis. "Disadvantaged" adults, in the context of lifelong learning, comprise a far broader group that that which we sometimes see embraced by the phrase. It includes not only those who have been disadvantaged by income, by minority status, or by handicap; it includes those who, once not conscious of such disadvantage, only later find themselves to have been inadequately trained for a world in which change is constant and often wrenching; and it includes those who in age alone learn that the educational opportunities they encountered

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were not adequate to sustain them in later life.

This granted, it is still necessary to add one further, and yet more serious caution. The absence of the disadvantaged from the cohorts of those engaged in lifelong learning is not simply to be accounted for by a present absence of opportunity; it is accounted for by the absence of inclination, in the absence, further, of that special kind of program that is designed to encourage those who have neither a history of past success, nor the promise of immediate advancement. I pointed out a few moments ago, Mr. Chairman, that those who engage in continued education are primarily those whose experience of education and whose experience of life have been fortunate. Those who have not done well or gone far in their early schooling show little inclination to continue; those who are unemployed show less interest in further training than those who have prospects of advancement; those who need are not necessarily those who are asking.

The problem, therefore, is a little more difficult than that we have encountered in trying to secure equal opportunity for the admission of all high school students into postsecondary education. The opportunity to attend good high schools, and the opportunity to receive at least basic support in college--these have been almost enough to ensure equal opportunity for access to postsecondary education among our interested teenagers. But like primary education at the other end of the spectrum, we have every indication that adult education is not necessarily appealing. And it is sometimes less appealing insofar as it takes the form of and follows the schedules of traditional postsecondary patterns. The disadvantaged here are not kept out by the expense, or by crass prejudice,

but more often by the absence of a kind of educational circumstance that can induce renewed effort from those who are by now educationally disadvantaged.

What I am suggesting, then, is this: that if we are truly to provide opportunities for lifelong learning to all of our citizens, including all of those who have been disadvantaged in various ways, then we shall need to concentrate much of our thought and much of our funding upon (1) the development of services through which adults can assess their genuine educational needs; (2) the development of programs designed to meet those needs specifically (and therefore good enough to entice those once deprived nonetheless to try again); and (3) the coordination of the various resources, institutional and human, that can make the programs truly accessible to the needs.

The outlook for Title I

Let me summarize by putting this another way. I'm thinking that the federal government is faced with three broad alternatives regarding lifelong learning:

-- It could launch an expansive role, greatly expanding and focusing federal investment, to promote lifelong learning as an instrument of federal policy. But, although the concept of educational entitlements for all citizens is often cited as a goal, a broad federal policy designed to serve all adults in a "learning society"--as desirable as that development might be--is probably too expansive (and too expensive) a role at this time.

-- It could maintain the current posture, letting matters take their course, with the initiative for expansion and coordination

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left to others. This alternative would permit continued support of those adult learning programs which serve the particular interests or missions of government agencies, continued direct support of those adults already eligible to receive aid (through student assistance or GI Bill benefits), and maintenance of categorical grant programs, such as Title I. This would be the easiest course to take: funding for programs explicitly focused on adult lifelong learning is minimal (Title I-A is slated currently for $10 million; Title I-B would receive no funds), and the large number of programs bearing on lifelong learning but directed to other federal objectives would be left unaffected.

-- It may target the federal role, sharpening its focus in the lifelong learning arena. Federal support to education, historically, has been based on some national goal or purpose to be furthered through education, and this approach could give a clear sense of the federal priorities for adult learning.

It is my sense that in a time of restrained budgetary expectations, federal policy should not supplant the efforts or investment of others, but focus, rather, on the areas of greatest need where others are unwilling or unable to respond. We should try to focus the federal role in the adult learning arena without establishing a new federal objective. And I believe we may do this by extending the centerpiece of current federal policy--equal educational opportunity--to encompass and define the federal role toward lifelong learning.

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The federal role in lifelong learning may be premised on two objectives, and designed to encourage specific means to those ends.

Its first objective should be to promote access of disadvantaged adults: those who by virtue of previous education, income, age or handicap are denied--or presently discouraged from using--opportunities for post-secondary education. Access to postsecondary education is too narrow for many of those adults who best might use it, and the responsibility of the federal government is to frame federal programs which effectively help those adults with the greatest education needs.

The second objective of federal policy in lifelong learning should be to recognize and encourage the active participation and investment of other sectors, particularly the states and private employers, in this focus on disadvantaged adults. States and localities already provide substantial support for adult lifelong learning, and many have been active in planning for the needs of adult learners. Private sector employers, too, play a significant role in the education of adults--indeed, employers are the largest source of support for adult learners outside individuals and families themselves. Federal policy should not supplant the role of either of these (or other) parties. It should provide leadership in focusing their attention and resources.

The means follow upon the objectives. In seeking to serve the disadvantaged, we shall be looking for innovative instruments to assess their needs, viable mechanisms to counsel in their choices, and for exemplary programs which may set the style for lifelong learning among those who have been for a time denied its advantages. These are suitable candidates for federal interest. And a federal effort--doubtless with

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the states--is needed, too, to analyze and coordinate our institutional resources and programs of lifelong learning, so that new networks, and new economies, may be effected as new clienteles are afforded access to the learning society.

Thus within the context of Title I, the federal government may more sharply focus its own efforts and that of the states and private sector.

-- Title I can assert that the fundamental goal of federal policy in this area is to assure that those most in need of education as adults have the opportunity available to them. If nothing else, such a statement can provide a benchmark against which current and future proposals may be measured.

-- Title I can foster information, assessment, and counseling services for adult learners. While all students can profit from good information and guidance in educational decision-making, adults have fewer places to which they can turn for such help since, unlike younger students, they are usually outside the educational system.

-- Title I can serve to promote experimentation and innovation, encouraging new means of assuring access to education and other related services for adults, and new programs designed to be specifically responsive to their various, distinctive circumstances. Federally supported projects will bear a clear relationship to the goal of extending access and be provided on a competitive basis.

Finally, Title I should provide the means to frame and develop answers

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to policy questions about lifelong learning--to recover the momentum that was lost after a promising start under Title I-B.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman, and members of the subcommittee, for this opportunity to share some of the College Board's views with you on the needs of adult learners, lifelong learning, and Title I. I would be pleased to respond to any questions, and look forward to the comments of my fellow witnesses.

June 21, 1979

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